

Life of the Spirit

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A DIURNAL FOR NOVEMBER

BY

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EATH! What is death but home? 'At the hour of death call me.' That is the prayer that we have put on our lips by the Church. One of those old prayers, prayers that endure, solid prayers, no nonsense about it, one of those prayers that carries with it a fortifying power. People are sometimes frightened of talking of death; we shrink from death naturally, rightly, it is the breaking up of all we know, it is the putting away of familiar things, it is venturing into a strange country; about it there must be a certain strangeness and fear and sense of disaster—and yet, why? 'At the hour of death call me.' That is all death ever is—just a voice calling.

2. Make sure of this that we are looking at him steadily, steadfastly seeing him present in the world, in our lives, in our fellows, consciously living with him. Remember we cannot touch pitch without being defiled, so we cannot live with holiness and not be holy.

3. Just before the business of life, almost at dawn, we talk to him. Think of that wonderful saying of St John's 'and when morning dawn was come Jesus stood upon the shore'.

4. We picture him in the various moments of his life, in various circumstances; we note how he bears himself, what he says and does. With this we contrast our own failure, meanness, little-mindedness; but we then say to ourselves: 'Well in spite of all this, I am not going to lose heart. Of course I can never catch up to him as he swings down the road; but then, he never asked me to catch up, he only asked me to follow.' Follow then I can. For me he is the perfect figure of a man—much more human than the saints, than the Baptist, because he is divine. He is a pillar of fire

¹ Towards the end of Fr Bede Jarrett's life a religious collected together an anthology of his sayings given to her community during retreats. These she arranged one for every day of the year and her selection for November is here presented.—EDITOR.

by night to me and I follow a speck in the distance, stumbling, wearied, dusty, frequently falling yet for all that a follower. Christ is for me the ideal, which is in him real, and in me, though never to be realised, provoking me to continued action.

5. Our prayer must be built with our own hands . . . the *one* thing I can offer for myself, from myself.

6. Let me consider what the morning Mass must have meant to the Mother of God. When her Child had been taken from the Cross and laid in the tomb she was to see him on earth again after he had risen from the dead; but after the Ascension she was to see him no more till that day when she passed to the Day. But at the Mass, when she watched the beloved disciple hold up what seemed bread and when she heard the whispered words of power, she knew him once again in the breaking of the bread. Dare we trespass nearer on that sacred intimacy? She saw, as on Calvary, her Son's death. For St Peter, St John and the rest, how fervent must have been their reparation at Mass for that sad night when they left him or denied him, or stood far off from him. What comfort, consolation, encouragement in the missionary ventures of faith indeed! Let me think of the strength that came to them every morning that they held in their hands the bread and knew that it had indeed become that Body they had seen and handled—for the men and women and troops of little children imprisoned in the Catacombs who found, in the Mass said in the wind-swept passages amid the tombs of the martyred Christians, the grace to meet with patience the trouble that each day brought, who saw in the sacrifice the open door beyond their narrow lives. However dreary or intolerable in itself the hour was made glad and cheerful by the savour of this saving rite. Our fathers in the days of persecution risked all for the chance Mass and the infrequent visits of a priest who might repeat for them the ceremonies of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and make the loss of lands and life easy compared with the gaining of that 'seldom presence'. If I wish to value aright my privilege of the Mass I must follow intelligently the whole ceremony from the *Confiteor* to the last Gospel.

7. To hold God before us, keep ourselves face to face with God, *that is* religious life.

8. The soul is certain of its release [from purgatory], but it cannot in any way that we know of hasten the time of it; it is left in that regard entirely in our hands, at our mercy. It is, as St Thomas reminds us, the supreme expression of friendship that the friend should bear the sufferings of his friend; if we could take upon our shoulders the pains of all our friends, surely they would always be at peace. Here, then, that course is open to us and we can truly

save them from these penalties. They are waiting—not impatiently, for they cannot cry out against the will of God; but it is in my power to help them. Let me see to it that this is done, and the law of love obeyed.

9. Believe in God's knowledge, wisdom, love, humanity, benignity, in his gentleness—then you have something to sooth all dismay and distress. 'Let not your heart be troubled.' Why should our hearts be troubled? Trust in God. What does it matter who is against me, I have God. He has always been good to me. So not exactly in confidence do we look to the future, we do not look out at it—we leave it in God's hands. He has never yet failed us and he will never let go—we may, he will not.

10. There will be one who will be to us in death a comfort, a refuge, a hope. The very figure of the Judge will be itself the sole sight that will give us any gleam of brightness in so horrid a scene. The five great wounds—will not their light illuminate even the dark corners of a stricken soul and give it hope in the weary waste of its bitter isolation. Through him will all our good actions take on an infinite value. The comfort that he himself has given in his own wonderful description of that day is found in the gracious text: 'Inasmuch as you did it to the least of my brethren you did it to me'. Whatever we have done that is good will have its reward from him. The great doctrine of the unity of all Christians into a sacred body of which Christ is the head will give even in the horrors of that moment a supreme relief. All the devotion that I have shown to the saints will there have been gathered up and regarded as devotion to him; for a Catholic reverence for the saints is only exhibited because they are his friends so that in reality (as we hold) those who have shown them reverence have really been showing reverence to Christ. The kindnesses of life, the little we have done for others, will be remembered for our reward. Thus through the terrors and horrors of the awful judgment there will always be the light lit by friendship; the unswerving love that we have shown to him who is ever faithful will not be forgotten. There can be no loneliness so long as he is there.

11. It doesn't matter what your means of transit are provided you scale the hills at last, pushing up into the sky.

12. In our hearts we must find peace—*truth*. Remember only to gaze at God. In the confessional is set a picture not of ourselves but of God on the cross, it implies [that] this is not my act of sorrow but God's act of mercy. The highest act of sorrow is that where self is forgotten, only God, absolutely, himself. If we would find life we must lose it, if we would find forgiveness of our sins we must forget about them and think only of God.

13. Of us is asked that venture of faith called meekness. It gives peace and is anything more needed? So, treading on the waters—at peace—relying not on self, that is forgotten, relying absolutely on God.

14. The human soul is so completely a thing that you cannot root out the tares without doing some mischief to the good. The tendencies to evil that are in us are mingled with the tendencies to good. We are what we are and we must put our hands in the divine hands and take our life as God has given it to us. Prayer means union with God, with the divine will. Never say 'Take temptation away from me', rather say, 'Give me strength always to hold out'. That I think is one of the lessons we most need in prayer. Strengthened by his power, 'Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me'.

15. We require mercy [while] living and still more do we require it at death. To our Mother we turn, knowing our need, and beg her to turn her eyes of mercy towards us as she stands at the throne of God.

16. 'Nothing else but thee, Lord', said St Thomas. And we must set our hearts on nothing else than himself. Poverty, chastity, obedience, these are means to do it more easily, literally, whole-heartedly.

17. I must be content simply to take the life of this day. Let the dead past bury its dead and let tomorrow take care for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own evil. Let me resolutely fight the battle that presents itself to me and leave alone the bogey that my own imagination by itself has created. Even were I assured of length of days let me be content to take each as it comes. I shall fail tomorrow? Perhaps! Anyhow, let me make certain that I do not fail today. Today God is with me. Will he not, who inhabiteth eternity, be able to be with me tomorrow also? Steadfastness in love is the most attractive virtue in God or man.

18. By the divine liturgy, the eyes of the soul are steadily lifted to God. By the austere and silent fashion of his life the distractions of the world are held off him. By the long dwelling therefore upon the divine beauty while the soul is at peace, the fire of love breaks out in the heart of the monk.

19. To meet all that life may yet hold of loneliness, trial and failure in the spirit of Christ-like acceptance of God's will, of the Christ-like joy and desire, we must look at life steadily, unshrinkingly, recognising that we too may be called by God to follow his footsteps along the dolorous way of sorrow. 'Go and prepare', he said to Peter, 'that *we* may eat'. And this preparation he asks equally of each individual soul. Each must make the necessary effort of the preparation.

20. Your own saint, St Andrew, saw his beauty and caught the eye of our Lord. 'Tell me where thou dwellest', the boy asked. It was not enough to visit him; 'Where do you live?' he wanted to know. And our Lord answered, 'Come and see'. He would not tell—'Come yourself and look'. And Andrew looked—it took him all his life to look. The next time he left all, still looking, and found he had no abiding place—no city, no home, and he chased him for three years. And Andrew still followed and when our Lord left the world to go back to his Father, Andrew found him in the souls around—he looked for the home of Christ there.

21. Nowadays there is the terrible desire to finish everything. What does it matter if it is finished or not so long as it is as God wills it to be—leave it to him. As Mother Julian says, 'There's no doer but he'. God will make good what we leave undone. The children [in your school] are *his* children. His care of them is greater than yours can ever be. Trust him to make good.

22. We, saying the rosary, feel the closeness of God's love—know that he came to save me, died for me, and that under the protection of his Mother we come to him to learn his beauty and majesty and strength and endurance and purity. All this will enlighten the understanding of the soul and help you to come, through your devotion to her, to him. He is your Ideal, the one you love and want to imitate—your God, closer to you at every time of your life at every minute of the day, until the end when we shall see things greater than we can imagine—see and possess *him* for ever.

23. When we think of God's knowledge, his blazing justice, though true, we must remember his almost incredible mercy. Now there your past lies. St Catherine of Siena speaks of 'the pacific sea of peace', clear-coloured and softened, translucent, really *mercy*. 'Let the dead bury their dead; Come thou and follow me.' Leave all the past alone, or, if you will go back, remember it is enshrined in him. In amber some poor thing died. It has tossed on the sea for ages and is enshrined in the clear amber—so we in God.

24. Children are impressed not by what we say but by what we are. A child may be put off higher ideals by the failure of a teacher to aim high. Education is not to teach a child to gain a livelihood but to teach it how to live. Education is not training the memory but the soul—forming of character.

25. Prayer must be familiar talk, chatter, the unfolding of our heart, not artificial. No one on earth would ever stand being spoken to as we speak to God. 'O Thou', publicly, yes, but not privately. Talk—don't merely present grand phrases.

26. Now just because life is so dreary and humdrum, we must

keep hold of our ideal, and despite appearances convince ourselves that it is a sacred thing. We must see in it nothing common nor mundane, but continually be searching for the nobler side of it, not to live a life that is out of the ordinary, but in the ordinary minute details of life to see something always worthy of human effort. If we care really to do so we can see wonderful things in the dullest of our neighbours, for birth is always a miracle and death a tragedy.

27. Surely it will be of the utmost importance to me to realise this nearness of God, and the courage that its perception will give. In all my trials none are so hard for me to bear as discouragement and depression. How then can I now shirk my duty and the disagreeable necessities imposed on me once I have made use of the divine friend, whose hand is always locked in mine?

28. The very monotony of his chant, its rising and falling cadence becomes even a physical help to steady his attention and keep it fixed, and all his life is lived for these brief moments. They justify monasticism to the monk. They make him realise the better part that he has chosen; they make worth while all his sacrifice and his austerity; and the deepening loneliness of life (whatever may be the work that he is engaged on) suddenly loses all its menace and becomes the necessary condition of his new-found soul.

29. Through the ways of sorrow and through discipline only shall men reach God one by one. So they found it—they that had known and loved God, his own great lovers, the saints in every time. So St Andrew, today's patron, found his way to God; he had followed him through corn-fields, he had followed him and heard about the sparrows and the lilies that grow in the fields, he had seen the sheep on the hillside and somehow they seemed to disclose knowledge, but that was learning discipline at the feet of Christ. When God exalted himself upon the Cross, lonely, suffering, then at last he knew that he had found the way to Christ. Andrew found him on the cross; so his Mother found him too; he suffered and she suffered in his suffering. Always on the cross; there is no other way to the discipline through which knowledge reaches us.

30. In the acts of St Andrew's martyrdom we read how he expressed his love by way of death. He comes to the place of death and when he saw the cross, 'Where dwellest thou?' the old question of the boy, was still in his heart. He had to climb to the cross to find where Christ dwelt—here was his answer and his joy overflows. 'O precious cross, which the members of my Lord have thus made so goodly, how long have I loved thee, how constantly have I sought thee! And now that thou art come to me, now is my soul drawn to thee. Welcome me from among men and join me again to my

Master, that as by thee he redeemed me, so by thee also he may take me unto himself.' Andrew had missed the way on that dark, dreadful day, Friday and its eve—and now lonely, desolate, and in agony, 'Where dwellest thou?'—and the answer 'Come and see'. He was to go through his life looking, and the realisation was only to be found at the end—on the cross. Hide and seek, always trying to find him under disguises. Where does he not dwell; where shall we not find him? 'If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall the hand lead me.' 'Where dwellest thou?' Where? In everybody, in everything. To find him in the love of the brotherhood is love of himself. Patient kindness to see Christ in all, in work, in pain, in distress, in joy. The one thing that can alter life, if we love and look, knowing he is there. 'Where dwellest thou?' Look and find him in that last place of all, the hour of our death. 'Though I go down into the valley of the shadow I shall not fear, for thou art there.' It robs death of its horror, of all but *him*. To find him, that is most excellent, the purpose of the cloister, why we come. We must go as pilgrims, searching. If we never find him at least we can look for him—and we have found *life*.



FROM ST AUGUSTINE

'Fides enim debet praeecedere intellectum, ut sit intellectus fidei praeium.'

Sermo CXXXIX—1.

'Si non potes intelligere, crede ut intelligas. Praecedat fides, sequitur intellectus.'

Sermo CXVIII—1.

To understand, a man must first believe:
How can a mortal's finite mind receive
Infinity? How shall the spark contain
Love's conflagration, or the ephemeron gain
One pulse of Th'Eternal?

By Faith alone

The darkened stage is lit, the scenery shown:
Then in that light, Reason will search, and find
The forms of Heavenly Truth for Earth designed.

JOHN SEARLE.

THE MYSTICISM OF THE ROSARY

BY

MICHAEL WELLESLEY, T.O.S.D.



HERE is no doubt that of the many methods of prayer which the Church has placed in the hands of the faithful for their sanctification, the holy Rosary is among the surest and best. It is a well of grace whose source is the God-Man himself; not above even the least of his little ones drawing therefrom the sweet, fresh waters of everlasting life; inexhaustible to the most profound intellects, a *summa theologica* of the Catholic Faith. It is safe and sure because it is sound theology, and assures to prayer that objectivity which it should possess if it is to avoid the easy pitfalls of idle dreaming and speculation, and it fixes the gaze of the mind and the aspirations of the heart on the precious mysteries of our Lord's life, rather than a barren and too often harmful preoccupation with our own interior life, which is so characteristic of this age of amateur psycho-analysts and morbid introspection. Moreover the whole lovely drama which was enacted by Christ for our sanctification, whose motive is the fathomless abyss of love which the divine Lover feels for what is his own by every conceivable right and title, must not be merely considered as acts of the historical Christ of two thousand years ago, complete and finished, but, like the holy Mass, a drama which demands daily re-presentation, a sublime mystery which must be lived through again in each individual life, woven into the very texture of the mind. By watching him with the mind's eye we come to understand something of him, knowledge bursts into love and we desire to imitate him; gradually we put on the likeness of Christ, become conformed to him: he, growing in us, takes ever more and more possession of us, until it is no longer the 'I' but the 'Thou' ruling and directing, and the consecration which we made of ourselves in baptism, which we re-affirmed in the anointing of confirmation, bears blessed fruit in us. Transformed into him we radiate him; the clammy darkness of self-hood is driven back by the Light of the World, the terrible loneliness of the creature is replaced by the love and friendship of the Creator, from servants we become sons. In us he walks once more the high-ways and by-ways of the world, through us he permeates the structure and fabric of human life, as he must do until the end of time. Not only is this holiness, but it is Catholic Action as well. No shop, factory, school, no place where men work or live together must be without his presence burning through us Catholics who are his bearers, his ambassadors.

The primary problem of every age, of every individual and nation is not of doing but of being. If we will be other Christs in the measure and manner which he has designed for us from all eternity we may, very largely, leave the perils of doing in his hands, because by being like Christ we shall act like him, and in accordance with the will of the Father. God's work will then be done in God's way and in God's time, and it will endure because it is his. Contemplating the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord in the mysteries of the Rosary we should endeavour not to stop there, but in him and with him and through him enter into the spacious garden of his divinity resting for as long as we may in order that returning again from his holy garden to the noise and clamour of human things we shall be inwardly refreshed and strengthened, and better able to give others that peace which the world cannot give.

In order to experience the life of the blessed Trinity in the soul we need the knowledge of Christ in our mind, and the love of the Holy Spirit in our will to make this experience tangible and real. Into this life we were born at baptism, the dawning of the day whose noon-tide splendour will cause the very essence of our being to rejoice with an unimaginable and eternal beatitude. Outside Christ himself no one can teach our hearts and minds more surely, more sweetly, simply and perfectly than his holy Mother, through whom he willed to come to us, and was not sullied thereby, and by whom it is still his will to bestow upon us all the riches of his grace. With her impeccable flesh he clothed the blinding light of his divinity, tempering its brilliance to the frailty of eyes long accustomed to twilight and darkness, and the tenuous shapes of things half real. It is in her Immaculate Heart that the wonderful mystery of Christ was pondered and guarded, and it is she who, with gracious love, will instruct us therein. Through the whole symphonic tempo of the Rosary it is her name in the angelic salutation which threads in and out of the major movements. And so indeed it should be, for she is the symbol of the human soul, for what God worked in and through her he desires to work in and through every human soul. The human soul doing the will of God becomes the 'Mother' of God with a spiritual 'motherhood'; and she will form him in us as no other being under God can do.

We have mentioned the objectivity of the Rosary, the factual reality of the mysteries which we contemplate therein. But the Rosary also has a mysticism of its own; that is to say that in addition to the mental beholding of the great facts of the Redemption as they actually occurred there is also the mystical significance underlying them, which can be taken as a type or symbol of a truth

valid for the interior development of the spiritual life. Besides being historical events, they are component parts in the holy Mass of Christ's life, and have a reality and meaning in the order of the spirit; they are stages to which our own spiritual life must conform as the archetypal pattern upon which the interior life, indeed life itself, is designed, because the Love-Word, the God-man Jesus Christ, and everything he does are a living plan drawn by the blessed Trinity on the parchment of our human flesh. With God nothing is wasted, and nothing is without meaning, not even the brief life of a sparrow, or the ephemeral delicacy of the dew-hung web. It is his will which regulates the planets in the remote silence of interstellar space and clothes the grasses of the field with the tender loveliness of his own mind. These holy mysteries, truly so called, since only the wisdom and love of God knows the length and breadth and height and depth of them, are preceded, accompanied and terminated by the *Pater*, *Ave* and *Gloria*, each possessing a theological profundity all its own.

The *Pater*, which is the norm of all prayer, has the peculiar value of being taught us by our blessed Lord himself and expresses those sentiments which motivated his own holy soul, and which he desired so ardently should animate ours. The thoughtful recitation of this one prayer alone has raised souls to the heights of union with God. The *Ave* recalls incessantly the sinless state of our holy Mother, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the blessedness of her divine Motherhood, and begs of her to intercede for us with her Son, with whom her soul is indissolubly knit. The *Gloria*, the lesser doxology, echoes the greater which was sung by the angelic hosts on the night of Christ's birth. It is a perfect expression of the adoration which the sacred humanity of the Word always rendered to his Father, of the lovely human worship which our Lady offered to God, and a perpetual reminder that the whole aim and purpose of our life is to adore and serve the blessed Trinity here below, in order to merit a share in their life hereafter.

The mysteries themselves are arranged in three series of five under the titles of joyful, sorrowful and glorious, and cover the main events in the birth, passion and resurrection of our Lord. It may be a help to recall that five is also the number of his adorable wounds in whose sweet depths we may recollect ourselves whilst considering him who bore them. In the joyful mysteries we may especially ask of God an increase of the theological virtue of that faith which so wonderfully illuminated our blessed Lady, and led the shepherds and the wise men to the poverty-stricken birth place of the world's Lord. We may also renew our devotion to the Father, the first Person of the holy Trinity, who so loved the world that

he sent his only begotten Son, as the plenary message of his love. St Paul speaking of this says: 'God having spoken of old to our forefathers through the prophets, by many degrees and in many ways, has at last in these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the world. He being the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of his substance, upholds the universe by God's powerful mandate.' (Heb. 1, 1-3.)

The sorrowful mysteries are especially appropriated to the second Person, the Word, who, 'though being equal with God . . . emptied himself, took the nature of a slave and was made like to men . . . he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death—even the death of the Cross.' (Phil. 2, 7-8.) We may also ask for growth in the theological virtue of hope, for Christ the hope and expectation of the nations has come and in him we have forgiveness of sins and surety of eternal life. Finally, in the glorious mysteries, we can adore the work of the Holy Ghost and implore of him an ever deeper possession of the theological virtue of charity, as well as the perfect operation of his gifts in our soul. Created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, the holy Rosary shows forth in a wonderful way the power and perfection of all three working as One.

God, speaking to us through Isaias (61, 10), says: 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice he hath covered me, as the bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels', for the Christian soul should always be filled with joy, as St Paul teaches, and at no time more completely than when pondering over the mysteries of the Incarnation. Christ the Joy of God has come, the silent Word has taken a human mouth, and sings his eternal love song in the world that has waited so long for the sound of his voice. So often throughout the New Testament we hear him saying: Be of good heart: Fear not: Trust in me: My peace I give unto you: for the 'kingdom of God is . . . justice and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'. (Rom. 14, 17.)

The first thing the mysteries of the Incarnation should teach us, then, is joy; a joy which springs from complete confidence in God our Father who loves us with an everlasting love, for, outside sin, neither life nor death, neither trials nor tribulations can pluck us from his hand. Moved by the joy which filled her soul our blessed Lady cried out: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath exulted in God my Saviour . . . for to me the Almighty hath done wonders and holy is his name'. She too is holy, with the

holiness of a perfect human soul, the second Eve who being espoused by the Holy Spirit brought forth the thrice Holy of God. She is the type of every human soul who desires God and seeks to be his 'Mother'.

What spiritual truths does her simple life teach us? Surely that of detachment, recollection and love. She knew not man. When the great message came to her she was sitting quietly in her room; always she bided in the inner room of her soul, adoring the God to whom she had vowed herself by a vow of virginity. When God wedded her, our Mother in grace, he espoused every human soul who, until the end of time, shall give itself to him. No soul can desire God more than God yearns for that soul. If in detachment, recollection and love we wait for him and desire his coming, he will surely come. But he will not force open the door of our inner room if our will locks it against him. It is for us to leave that door wide open, to say our '*fiat mihi*' with the blessed Virgin, and to feel the 'power of the Highest' overshadowing us by grace, fertilising our soul to bring forth the sweet flower of Jesse. We see that in the Trinity it is the very strength and perfection of God's love which impelled him to create us, other beings who might share in that flashing torrent of life and love which is his essence and existence, and we see that Mary's love drove her over the long journey through barren hill country to visit her cousin St Elizabeth. The income we receive in prayer is only given that we may pay it back again to our neighbour in the golden coin of charity. How shall we love him we cannot see, if we do not love him we can? What is done to and for our brethren is done to and for God, a fact as certain as death. Love of God and charity to our neighbour bring about the birth of Christ in us, the baptismal seed grows and crowds out our selfish autonomous existence, which is one of the miseries of hell, and we are possessed by him. The Presentation in the Temple and the Finding of the Child there serve to underline this basic fact of life, that we belong to God as his peculiar possession, and that he is always to be found in the temple of the soul, if we seek him there like Mary and Simeon and Anna, and it is there he says, 'I will make them joyful in my house of prayer'. (Is. 56, 7.) No prayer could conclude and sum up what has been said on these first mysteries more perfectly than the collect for the second Mass of Christmas Day: 'Grant us, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who are bathed in the new light of thy Incarnate Word, may show forth in our works that which by faith burns in our minds'. For the Christian soul every day and hour is Christmas Day.

There must come a time when we feel that our love is crucified, when the soul is sorrowful unto death. Night enters the garden

of the soul and from the communion which we had previously with our Lord, we must go forth to suffering and death. Yet it is a baptism with which we must be baptised, even as he was. We must be willing to be spurned by the world and even good people, lashed by malicious tongues, mocked and set at nought, the mind crowned with pain and forgetfulness, and purified in blind faith. The purification of the soul demands that we pass by Gethsemane in some form or another, condemned by Pilate, the secular world, and go forth bearing our Cross; thus must we suffer in order to enter into glory. Here we have no abiding city, and the heavenly city and the heavenly birth require us to tread the Royal Highway of the Cross. If we are crucified with Christ we shall rise with him into the immortal glory of everlasting life, where tears and sorrow shall be no more. Endure with him but a little while and in the day of his own choosing we shall be with him in Paradise, even here on earth. The growth of divine light and love cannot be other than a Crucifixion for us because the life of the spirit is anathema to the natural life which seeks always the most immediate and easy satisfaction. So we must be willing, desirous, to drink the chalice of suffering, that the action of the Mass may be continued throughout our daily life and that we may grow to full stature in Christ. We must come to thirst for God and for souls with arms wide stretched to the whole world, excluding none, refusing nothing, willing to experience the '*Eloi, eloi, lama Sabachtani*' of complete desolation, in order to achieve the blessed confidence of the 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'.

Look down, we beseech thee, O Lord, on this thy family for whom Jesus Christ our Lord did not hesitate to deliver himself into evil hands, and undergo the torment of the Cross.

After a severe winter nature seems hard and dead and cold. The ground is dun and brown, and the trees lift their bare cruciform arms to the dull and heavy sky. But winter gives way to spring and summer, and new life follows close upon death. Except the grain of wheat die there will be no harvest, no bread, no sacred host compounded of millions of grains which have died to arise anew as the glorified body of the Lord.

These last five mysteries are radiant with the light of the Holy Ghost, the joy of a burning pentecostal love which cried the good news in manifold tongues for all to hear and understand. Death is overcome, and the grave shown to be only a momentary resting place. For the mortal has put on immortality, and the corruptible incorruptibility, and we are transformed into him we love. We are risen from the body of this death, and spiritually ascended to the Father through his beloved Son in the power of the Holy Ghost.

We have completed that adoption of sons whereby we cry *Abba*, Father! Bearers of the spiritual and risen Lord, sealed and stamped with his holy indwelling, we may pour forth our own love upon all men pentecostal-wise. Life and death no longer hold any terrors for us who walk with the Lord of life and Victor of death through his world which he has made, into which he was born and which he has signed in every part with the pure love-sign of the cross. It is the knowledge of this truth which inspired St Peter to cry out: 'May the trial of your faith be found unto the praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ—whom not having seen you love: in whom also now, though you see him not you believe, and believing you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified'. Let our minds brood intently upon these fathomless mysteries gathering the life which they contain, that the will may transform it through the merits of the divine love.

So from the spring of the Incarnation through the autumn and bitter winter of the Passion we come to the eternal summer of Pentecost. 'The winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land. Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come!' So spoke the Spirit to the bride, and rising from her short sleep our blessed Lady entered into heaven and the joy of her Lord. Crowned by him with every grace and beauty she received the surpassing reward of her fidelity. Queen and Mother in the order of grace she dispenses to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, with the hand of a loving Mother. 'If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink'—from the sweet well of the holy Rosary, 'and out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'.

Praesta, quaesumus, Omnipotens Deus: ut claritatis tuae super nos splendor effulgeat; et lux tua corda eorum, qui per gratiam tuam, renati sunt, Sancti Spiritus illustratione confirmet. Amen.

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE GIFTS

This extract is from a 15th-century MS. *Laud miscell.* 330¹ on the religious life, written probably for Benedictine nuns, relating the external and interior life to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in an unusual order. The first chapter occupies almost half the work with a rambling commentary on the whole of the religious life, rule and customs as worked out under the guidance of holy fear. Of the other more brief chapters, the last two dealing with the higher gifts seem worthy of transcription. The unknown author's originality of approach and tender devotion, his shrewd insight into character and the directness and charm of his language raise the piece above the commonplaces of religious exhortation, so that it is still attractive and convincing to the simple of heart to whom it was dedicated four hundred years ago. The spelling has been modernised.
—C.K.



RELIGIOUS Sister, seven informations I read in holy writ to teach a simple soul for to dispose her heart to grace. The first is that Samuel, the prophet, teacheth us to make ready our hearts when he saith thus: 'Preparate corda vestra domino'. [1 Reg. 7, 3.] He saith: 'Make ready your hearts to God'. The second is that Solomon teacheth us to keep our hearts to God when he saith: 'Omni cum custodia serva cor tuum'. [Prov. 4, 23.] He saith: 'With all manner of busyness keep thine heart to God'. The third is that the book of Maccabees teacheth us to open our hearts to God, where it is written thus: 'Adaperiat dominus cor vestrum'. [2 Macch. 1, 34.] 'Our Lord', he saith, 'open your hearts to him'. The fourth is that Saint Paul teacheth us to stable our hearts to God, when he saith thus: 'Optimum est gratia stabilere cor'. [Heb. 13, 9.] 'The best thing to stable the heart, is grace'. The fifth is that Solomon teacheth us to give our hearts to God, when he saith thus: 'Justus cor suum tradet ad vigilandum diluculo ad dominum qui fecit illum'. [Ecclus. 39, 6.] He saith: 'The right-wise man shall give his heart for to wake (watch) to our Lord in the early morning'. The seventh is that Jeremy the prophet teacheth us to lift up our hearts to God where he saith thus: 'Levemus corda nostra cum manibus ad deum'. [Iam. 3, 41.] He saith: 'Lift we up our hearts

¹ The evidence for a Benedictine origin seems to arise from the emphasis on stability. On Fol. 22 we find: 'In profession thou art wedded to God in as much as thou hast made to him a byhest (promise) of obedience, of stableness in thy religion and also of true turning of manners'. This recalls the Benedictine formula of profession. There is no mention of poverty and chastity in this context.

with our works to God'. The seventh is that Joel the prophet teacheth us to cut² our hearts where he saith thus: 'Scindite corda vestra'. [Joel 2, 13.] He saith: 'Cut your hearts'.

Lo Sister! seven things be rehearsed of the heart, that is to make it ready, to open it, to keep it, to stable it, to give it, to lift it up, and to cut it. These seven, without the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, may not perfectly be performed; the which be these, for to begin at the last to the first. . . . By the gift of the dread of God the heart is made ready; by the gift of kunning³ it is kept; by the gift of pity⁴ it is opened; by the gift of strength it is stabled; by the gift of counsel it is given; by the gift of understanding it is lifted up; by the gift of wisdom it is cut.⁵ . . .

(Fol. 61) . . . *How and in what wise a minchen should lift up her heart to God by the gift of understanding.*

The gift of ghostly understanding is needful to thee for to lift up thine heart to God. First thine heart must be lift up by holy meditations. Solomon saith thus: 'Cogitatio eorum apud altissimum'. [Sap. 5, 16.] Thus Sister, set thy thought and meditation in Almighty God and his precepts. As Solomon says in another place: 'Habe cogitatum tuum in praeceptis altissimi et in mandatio eius assiduus esto'. [Eccli. 6, 37.] He saith: 'Have thy thought in the bidding of God, and because that it is not only enough to think on his bidding unless working follow, therefore 'be also busy in his precepts'. Thou thinkest well and art busy in the precepts of God when thou art not avoided⁶ from them by none encumbrance of deadly sin. . . . Now peradventure thou askest me: 'What and I think on my sins, is my thought not lift up to God?' I shall tell thee. There is two manner of thinking of sins, one is with repentance for to sorrow for them, another is with pleasure for to delight in them . . . when thou thinkest on sin repentantly then is thine heart above sin . . . and lifteth up the heart to God. . . .

. . . Many there be that think in their heart, but few with their heart. He thinketh in his heart that thinketh vanity. Also he that thinketh and considereth not what he thinketh, thinketh not with his heart, for his heart runneth where it will, there is nothing so flitting as is the heart. Sister, think thou therefore with thine heart wisely and discreetly, that it flit not about. Then may I say of thee that thy thought is on God or else on thy sins repentantly, that is

² cut, i.e., rend (Joel 2, 13).

³ Knowledge and so throughout.

⁴ At this time the sense of compassion had not been differentiated from 'piety' and 'pity' is used in both senses.

⁵ This preliminary section is quoted as being unusual and fruitful for consideration.

⁶ Separated: the old sense of avoid.

praising to God, and the relief⁷ (or the remnant) of thy thoughts make a great feast to God in thy soul. What be those reliefs which be left? Truly peace and joy of heart. These be the reliefs of that blessed table that David spoke of when he said: '*Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panes die ac nocte*'. [Ps. 42, 3.] He saith: 'My tears have been to me loaves both day and night'. When thou repentest thee of thy sins thou layest forth the table of penance and all that is left of that feast is joy and peace of heart. This is a blessed table, and these be blessed reliefs and blessed be all those that eat of the bread of such tears. Lift up, Sister, thy heart, and cast up all thy thoughts in God, and he will nourish thee with these loaves of tears that thy soul may be fed with them.

The second thing that lifteth up the heart is hope, as Solomon saith: '*Qui sperat in domino sublevabitur*'. [Prov. 28, 25.] 'He that hopeth in God shall be lifted up'. Well may hope be called a lifter-up of the heart, for as the prophet Isaias saith: '*Qui ambulat in tenebris et non est lumen ei speret in nomine Domini et innitatur super Dominum suum*'. [Isaias 50, 10.] 'He that goeth in darkness and hath no light, he should hope in the name of Jesus and fasten him upon the mercy of God and he shall be lift up. . . .'

The third thing that lifteth up the heart is desire, for a clean desire is hunger of the heart. Desire maketh the heart hungry for to have our Lord. Our Lord is the meat⁸ of a clean heart, but this meat is above us, thither then must we lift up our heart, there that our meat is. Such an hungry heart in desire, our Lord likeneth to an eagle, as he saith to Job: '*Numquid ad praeceptum tuum elevabitur aquila, et in arduis ponet nidum suum? in petris manet in praeruptis silicibus, inde contemplatur escam suam*'. [Job 39, 27-28.] He saith: 'Whether an eagle shall be lift up at thy biddings and make his nest in high places? in stones he resteth and in broken flints, from thence he looketh after his meat'. By this eagle thou shalt understand: the which is a solitary bird and flyeth high, and seeth subtilly; a solitary contemplative soul, that is departed from the love of worldly conversation, in whose flight is understood contemplation, and in whose sight is understood subtle understanding. Our Lord asketh of Job thus, whether such a contemplative soul shall be lift up at his bidding? as though he said: 'Nay Job not at thy bidding but at mine, for the grace of contemplation cometh from me, and when she is so lift up by contemplation at my bidding, then shall she make her nest by desire in high heavenly things. . . .'

The fourth thing that lifteth up the heart is a right intent,⁹ such as had St Paul when he said: '*Nostra conversatio in coelis est*' [Phil 3, 20.] 'The intent of our conversation is in heaven'; for he in-

⁷ Relief=remnant. ⁸ Always with the sense of 'food'. ⁹ intention.

formed¹⁰ all his intention to win heaven's bliss; thus shouldest thou do, Sister. . . .

These be the four lifters up of thy soul. . . . Four causes there be why thou shouldest lift up thy heart. The first is for thine own country is in heaven above and of kind¹¹ every reasonable creature hath a special love to his own country. This world thou mayst well wit, is not the country of thy heart, for therein thou mayst find no rest but rather trouble. In heavenly things I hope thou findest great rest, by that thou mayst well know that heaven is thy country and thine heritage, king's daughter, and a place of ghostly rest.

The second cause why thou shouldst lift up thy heart is because thy treasure is there, and thy treasurer also. Every good deed that thou dost, if thou do it for God's love, thou puttest it in Christ's hutch, and thou makest our Lord thy treasurer; then by reason where thy treasure is there thine heart should be: 'Ubi est thesaurus tuus ibi et cor tuum erit'. [Matt. 6, 21, not exact.] Make none thy treasurer but God, for he will at the last yield manifold double for a little.

The third cause why thine heart should be lift up, is because thou hast an heavenly Father, King's daughter! Heavenly children accord well to an heavenly father and therefore thou sayest when thou prayest: 'Pater noster, qui es in coelis'. In heaven he is, that thou prayest to. Therefore sister, to such an heavenly father, be an heavenly daughter, seeking, savouring, speaking and desiring heavenly things.

The fourth cause why thou shouldst lift up thine heart is because all perfection and fullness of all good is above us in heaven, where thou shalt find all the good that thou desirest. There thou shalt find health without sickness, youth without oldness, full love without hatred, freedom without bondage, fairness without deformity, abundance without necessity, peace without trouble, sikerness¹² without dread, knowledge without ignorance, glory without confusion and joy without sorrow. Lo sister! to this place wherein all joys be, thou shouldst lift up thine heart and say as St Austin saith: 'O heavenly Jerusalem, house of full great clearness, he receive me into thee, that made both thee and me. Amen'.

(Fol. 64.)—Capitulum septimum.

How and in what wise a minchen should cut her heart by the gift of wisdom.

Because I have declared thee how thou shouldst lift up thine heart and why, now shall I in this last chapter, by the grace of God and thy devout prayers, tell thee how thou shalt cut thine heart, as the prophet saith: 'Scindite corda vestra'.² He saith: 'Cut your hearts!'

10 set. 11 by nature. 12 security, certainty.

The cutting of the heart that very¹³ contrition causeth, I shall not declare in this place, for that cutting is known well enough of every clean heart, only of the cutting that (be)longeth to the gift of wisdom. When it is dissevered from all manner of carnality and when it is so purged from all manner of unlawful affections and made pure, then it savoureth¹⁴ Christ Jesu, and all thing that is not in Christ Jesu or not for Christ Jesu is unsavoury to such an heart. . . . Thou shalt understand that an heart made fat by the gift of ghostly love is departed from the flesh and all manner fleshly loves, from all manner unordinate and carnal affections. And so it is departed by the knife of ghostly wisdom, the which I call ghostly love, from all the fellowships, companies and manners of fleshly lovers. This is that sharp knife and that charity which Solomon speaketh of 'Est dilectio Dei honorabilis sapientia'. [Ecclus. 1, 14.] 'The love of God is a worshipful wisdom'. And it is of so worshipful wisdom that it causeth all thing to a clean soul, for to savour and to be felt, as they be. For this word sapientia, wisdom is no more for to say but a savoury feeling in his soul, that feeleth and savoureth ghostly everything as it is, that is sins (as) bitter, temporal goods foul, and spiritual ghostly, dear to God and precious. Wherefore Saint Bernard saith thus: 'Thou hast found plainly ghostly wisdom when thou wailest and sorrowest virtuously thy sins, and settest little by all worldly desires and desirest with all thine heart everlasting bliss: if thou savourest thus ghostly all things as they be, thou hast found plainly ghostly wisdom'.

Nevertheless thou shalt understand in this place, that wisdom is taken for the knowledge of the sweetness of God and had, as it may be, in this life by experience. To the which experiential sweetness enduceth us the prophet David when he said thus: 'Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est dominus'. [Ps. 34, 8.] 'Taste and see how sweet our Lord Jesus is'. First he saith taste and afterwards he saith see! for the taste of God bringeth a soul to the knowledge of God. Why saith he 'gustate', 'taste'? Truly for that whatever sweetness thou have of God in this life, it is but a tasting before (of) the sweetness that thou shalt have in bliss. Of this tasting St Austin had experience when he said to our Lord thus: 'Lord, otherwhile¹⁵ thou leddest me into a ghostly affection, that never I knew afore. into a marvellous sweetness; I (know) not what: and if that sweetness were complete in me, I (know) not of what thing it might be, but if¹⁶ it were heavenly bliss. And then anon, within a short while I fall down into my grievous and ponderous fleshly body that I bear about; and anon I am sopped up of mine old bodily customs. Then I weep and wail,

13 true. 14 tastes, apprehends, with a sense of pleasure. 15 sometimes, at times.
16 unless.

for I would abide still in that sweetness and I may not; and in my flesh I abide and I would not; over all I am a wretch, good Lord see to me!

Take heed, Sister, to the words of St Austin. He saith that he was led into a ghostly unused¹⁷ affection, into a marvellous sweetness, he (knew) not what, and he was anon thrown down into his corruptible body from that blessed sweetness. This unused ghostly affection may well be likened to ecstatic love. Ecstatic love is such a thing that it alieneth¹⁸ the soul far from her mind into the love of that thing the which it loveth. This ecstatic love otherwhile is taken for good love, as Saint Denis saith who calleth ecstatic love, such love which bringeth a lover all whole into the use and profit of that thing that is loved. With such love our Lord loved us, giving himself all whole into our use and profit.

Ecstatic love also is taken in another wise, it is taken otherwhile for alienation of the mind by love, as be all such fleshly lovers that wax mad for love, the which is caused of overpassing desire of the heart and of affliction of thought set upon fleshly love. . . . Nevertheless for to prove ghostly ecstatic love by the condition of natural ecstatic love, thou shalt understand that there be many tokens to know when ecstatic fleshly love worketh in amorous fleshly creatures. Amongst all, seven there be that I shall declare unto thee. . . . The first token of such lovers is that they covet much and speak little and also speak their words unperfectly. Right so ghostly all spiritual lovers speak many sentences of love that cannot be understood hardly of any but of such that be ghostly lovers, as they be. Christ's Spouse in the Book of Love rehearseth many such unperfect and defective speeches. Among all such is one: 'Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi'. [Cant. 2, 16.] 'My love to me, and I to him'. But (unless) these words were more openly declared, it seemeth right unperfect, for she telleth not what her love is to her, nor what she is to her love. But like as Aaron spake for Moses, so must ghostly reason speak for our affection, and fulfill the unperfect words of a loving soul, and say this: 'My love to me is able, and by his mercy I am made to him able'. Or thus, 'My love to me is meed and reward of all my labours, of all my sorrows and fatigations, right so, I am the rest of his labour, sorrows and fatigations, the which he suffered for to ransom me; and therefore like as he suffered diseases¹⁹ and tribulations for to have me, so shall I gladly suffer diseases and tribulations for to have him'. Or thus: 'My love to me lived and for me died, so shall I live to him and for him shall I die'.

¹⁷ unwonted, unusual. ¹⁸ estrangeth; taking out of itself; with something of the classical meaning of madness. ¹⁹ dis-ease, discomfort.

Lo, Sister! that thou mayest know how many declarations a loving soul needeth for to have expounding of her defective and unperfect words, yet many more (there be) than here be expounded to a loving soul, for the shortest sentence of love is open enough to her.

The second token of an ecstatic lover is dryness of all the bodily limbs. And that is because the heart is sore applied with all the bodily might²⁰ to that thing that it loveth. Right so to our ghostly God is in a manner dried up from the humours of fleshly lusts. Of purpose, a loving soul for the great passing love that she hath to this, I find a figure in Holy Writ, where I read thus: that our Lord departed the Red Sea by the blast of a great burning wind. By this Red Sea is understood fleshly lust. It may well be called a sea, for what that ever it pretendeth of any manner of sweetness, it endeth in bitterness. . . . By this great wind and burning is understood a fervent love in God that drieth up in manner all carnal affections in a clean soul. With such a great burning wind, the holy Apostles on Whitsunday were burned with love. . . . By that wind thou shalt understand the Holy Ghost. . . .

The third token of an ecstatic love is hollowness of eyes. All ecstatic lovers have hollow eyes. For the eyes follow the spirit drawing together to one place where they suppose that love is most fervent. Right so the inward eyes of a loving soul, the understanding and affections be sunk into the heart, for all that such a soul seeketh is withinforth, all that it loveth is inward and not outward. Also the ghostly eye of such a loving soul is sunk in, for to see that nothing be in the conscience which should displease her lover. Our Lord cometh when he toucheth the soul with love and devotion that she never felt afore, and he goeth when he withdraweth devotion, because a soul should know her infirmity, thinking that such devotion cometh only of God and not of herself. Also he withdraweth such special devotion, that when it cometh again it might be kept more daintiously. Many there be that have such special devotion and sweetness of love, but oftentimes they put it away from them by idle occupations, idle words, and other secular desires the which be seemeth not to them, and oftentimes receive outward solace immoderately; and also they say their service of God without hearty intention; and showing too much tenderness to their carnal friends. All these things put away special ghostly sweetness.

The fourth token of an ecstatic lover is dryness of his eyes and lack of tears unless it come of some special thought or remembrance of his love, insomuch that neither death of friend nor loss of temporal goods may in no wise make such ecstatic lovers for to weep. . . . Right so fareth a loving soul; she is not sorry for no manner of thing

²⁰ powers.

nor cannot weep unless it be for that thing that she loveth. Lo, Sister! if thou love God tenderly thou makest none nily²¹ sorrow for nothing, unless it be for that thing that belongeth to love of our Lord Jesu, for though all thing were lost from thee, thy principal lover Jesu is safe to thee.

Two things there be that make lovers for to weep, one is his songs of love, another is the fear that they have lest they lose their lover. As for the first, a lover that is far from his love singeth songs of love in mind of his love. So, Sister, must thou do; in as much as thy love is far from thee in this life, sing songs of love! Songs of love I call the songs of holy Church, such songs thou must sing devoutly in mind of thy love, melting in sweetness of devotion. Such a lover was St Austin when he said thus in his Confessions: 'I wept plenteously in hymns and songs sweetly sounding in the voice of holy Church'. [Book ix, sect. vi.] Thus do thou, Sister, in mind of thy love.

Some there be that sing in holy Church as a bell ringeth in the wind, more for praising of their fair voice, than for any special love of God. What do they but fill the ears of the people with noise? and well may such singing be called noise! Good sister, fill not only the ears of others, but specially with devotion the ears of him that biddeth thee thus: 'Sonet vox tua in auribus meis'. [Cant. 2, 14.] 'Sing', so saith our Lord in the book of Love, 'that thy voice may devoutly sound in mine ears'. I wot well that singing stirreth the people to devotion, but yet thou shouldest have such devotion in songs of holy Church that it sound rather in God's ear than in man's ear. Therefore when thou shalt sing, sing as St Paul saith: 'Psallas spiritu et psallas mente'. [1 Cor. 14, 15.] He saith: 'Sing in thy spirit and sing in thy soul'. Thou singest well in thy spirit, that is in thy ghostly strength when thou singest with devout melody of thy bodily voice. Thou singest well in thy soul, when thou singest savourily in ghostly understanding of thy soul.

The second thing that maketh a lover for to weep is fear that he hath for to lose his love. So wept David and Jonathan when they should separate asunder, but yet David wept much more for he loved more. Right so dread of separation, which is a manner of death, maketh a devout lover for to weep.

The fifth token of an ecstatic lover is an inordinate pulse. Every amorous lover hath either too slack a pulse or too swift a pulse after diverse apprehensions that he hath of love. A slack pulse he hath when he is in doubt of her whom he loveth. He hath also a swift pulse when he hopeth to have her whom he loveth. Thus it fareth

²¹ Nily = inly, inward.

in a loving soul. The pulse of a loving soul is affection, the which is swift when a soul hopeth to have him whom she loveth. Such apprehensions of love had David when he said: 'Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in deum vivum'. [Ps. 83, 3.] 'Mine heart and my flesh have great joy in God'. By the heart thou shalt understand thought, and by the flesh affection, his thought and his affection joyed so much in God for love that it skipped out ghostly, from itself into God.

Also the pulse of ghostly affection in an amorous lover goeth slackly, when a soul considereth her sins and the peril of ghostly death, perceiving how others more mightier, more stronger in virtue have fallen into sin. Therefore sometimes the affection of the soul went swiftly for love and then it goeth slackly for dread of falling.

The sixth token of an ecstatic lover is when all his thoughts and all his mind is turned deeply into the heart so far forth that there may no noise draw such a lover from his deep thought, but only when he heareth any word moved of his love. For it is the condition of an amorous fleshly lover, speak to him of what thing thou list, unless it be of his love, he knows not what thou meanest. And speak to him the least word that thou canst of his love, anon he wot well what thou meanest. Why is this, trowest²² thou? Truly for all his thought and mind is inwardly set upon her. In the same wise a loving soul that loveth our Lord cannot understand secular words, worldly tales and worldly tidings, for it toucheth not her lover. But if anything be moved to her of Christ Jesu, her lover, or of such thing that (be)longeth to him, she understandeth it quickly, for her mind is full set upon him and of him she list²³ to hear and of none other.

All the questions and demands²⁴ that such an one shall make, shall be of love, as Solomon saith in the voice of ghostly lovers in the Book of Love: 'Numquid quem diligit anima mea vidistis?' [Cant. 2, 3.] She saith: 'Saw ye not him whom my soul loveth?' It is the manner of ghostly lovers for to hear and ask tidings of their love, Jesus. Sorry then, may they be, that have a dull wit to understanding of ghostly things and a pliant wit for to understand worldly things and worldly tidings. It is a very (true) token that such a one wanteth the love of God. Therefore, Sister, be not likely awaked out of thy lovely sleep, by no worldly tales, but only when thou hearest any word or question of thy love Jesu!

The seventh token of an ecstatic lover is that when the heart of such an amorous lover is so y-knit and fastened to her that he loveth, that when that ever he seeth anything that is like to his love, in

22 dost thou think? 23 desireth, is pleased. 24 requests.

her absence, he is anon from²⁵ himself in a manner of woodness.²⁶ In the same wise a loving soul, when that ever she tasteth, be it never so little, of the excellent goodness and sweetness of God in this life, anon she is from herself and she beginneth to speak she knows not what. As St Peter did when he was with our Lord on the mount of Tabor and saw him transfigured into a clearness of great shining light; anon, he was from himself for joy and said he wist not what, when he said thus: 'Domine bonum est nos hic esse, faciamus hic tria tabernacula, tibi unum, Moysi unum, et Heliæ unum'. [Matt. 17, 4.] 'Lord, it is best to abide here; let us make here three dwelling places, one to thee, another to Moses, and the third to Elias'. Truly he wist not what he said when he said so. For as Doctors say, he heard how our Lord said before, that he should suffer death in Hierusalem, and yet he said that it were best to abide there! By this thou mayst understand that Peter was from himself, for he was ghostly drunk of the sweetness of Christ's presence and therefore he asked there for to abide. He had forgot that time what Christ said before how he should suffer passion in Hierusalem.

Of one thing take heed, he desired no dwelling place for himself but for others. In token that all such that be so ghostly drunk, be more liberal and large to others, in heart, than to themselves. He said not, 'to me one', but 'to thee one, to Moses one, and to Elias one', he reserveth nothing to himself and that was a great charity, which seeketh rather the ease of others than of himself. Also he wist not what he said for he was so drunk with love that he weened the joy that he saw had been the same joy that shall be had in heaven. And that was not so, but a likeness thereof.

For as the Prophet saith: 'None eye may see in earth that excellent joy in bliss the which our Lord hath ordained for them that love him'. [1 Cor. 2, 9.] That joy that loving souls shall have shall be to them an open clear knowing of perfect love and of the goodness of God, and siker possession of everlasting bliss. To the which bliss and joy that never shall have end, bring us he that bought us on that rood tree. Amen.

Sigh and sorrow deeply,
weep and mourn sadly,
pray and think devoutly,
love and long continually!²⁷

²⁵ out of, besides.

²⁶ madness.

²⁷ This little verse is often found written at the end of the MSS.

THE GROUND OF BESEECHING

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

FEW paradoxes can be more important for the Christian in quest of the true life than that between the multiplicity of Christian praying and the single unity of Christian prayer. This is especially applicable to the Christian who has made some progress in grace and is beginning to live a life of union. Mother Julian in her fourteenth revelation includes a short treatise on the prayer of beseeching in order to show how that type of prayer is part and parcel of the prayer of love, which is her one prayer. But from the very first she was confronted by many forms of prayer contrasted with the simplicity of God's goodness. We 'make many means' in order to come to God, praying him by means of the Blessed Sacrament, the Precious Blood, the Passion and Death; by means of his holy Mother, the holy Cross, the special saints and the hosts of heaven. All this, Mother Julian points out, is granted us by the goodness of God. It is necessary for our nature to have many things to grasp in this life of constant change; yet in one sense it reduces itself to a single prayer.

For the goodness of God is the highest prayer, and it cometh down to the lowest part of our need. . . . It is nearest in nature and readiest in grace (c. 6, pp. 12-15).

The wonderful mosaic of liturgical prayer with all its feasts and ceremonies, the multitudinous voice of the Divine Office and the sacred ceremonies of High Mass, Vespers, the Ordination of a Priest—all these are part of man's need in prayer. It is ludicrous for the enemies of the Church to point out that God cannot benefit by such display and so many words, and that he says in the Psalm that he has no need of our sacrifices and burnt offerings (cf. Psalm 49). All these things are included in our need for God, not in God's need of us, for of course he has no needs. But even the most elevated Christian mystic requires the multiplicity of the liturgy and outward forms of prayer to support him in his one prayer. The danger of being captivated by the great variety of ecclesiastical prayer and being immersed in multiplicity remains a reality especially for the beginner, but that is only part of the general 'danger' of having a body. The multiplicity should be leading all the time to a more unified type of prayer, until for such as Mother Julian the prayer is one in the centre of the soul while still retaining the beauty of variety in its externals.

The first step in this process of unification is sacrificial; it is the prayer of the crucifixion and therefore of the Mass. That is to say the soul must first desire to abandon itself to God in union with our Lord's passion and death which overcame sin and re-introduced man into the blessed presence of God. This may be called, for lack of a better phrase, the prayer of the co-victim—the phrase is awkward in English though it shines clearly in a great deal of St Paul's language. It is of course in this framework that the whole of Mother Julian's revelations is set. It was her desire to suffer with our Lord that prepared the way for her visions—love springing from sacrifice.

I desired a bodily sight wherein I might have more knowledge of the bodily pains of our Saviour and of the compassion of our Lady and of all his true lovers that saw, that time, his pains.

For I would be one of them and suffer with him (c. 2, p. 4).

Such a thirst for suffering would be unintelligible if it were left in its purely temporal context—the multiplicity of acts of mortification which in the lives of the saints repel so many modern readers. Such mortifications can only be understood fully in relation to the love of our Lord. So our Lady is the most perfect and the most potent example of the prayer of suffering in loving union with her Son.

For Christ and she were oned in love that the greatness of her loving was the cause of the greatness of her pain. For in this I saw a substance of nature's love, continued by grace, that creatures have to him; which kind love most fully showed in his sweet Mother, and overpassing; for so much as she loved him more than all other, her pains passed all other (c. 18, p. 40).

Our Lady was unique in this that all her suffering was in fact her Son's. We have to bring our own pains and mortifications to the side of Christ and so give them power and meaning; our Lady received all hers poured out upon her from Christ's side. So close is she to Christ in the union of the Passion that Mother Julian, despite her tender love and deep reverence for the Mother of God, does not actually see her but *understands* her presence in the vision of Christ's pains.

When we consider the incessant prayer of Christians directed to the Mother of God, the numerous feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the millions of rosaries recited every day, it becomes evident that she cannot be regarded as a kind of supernumerary mediator but that her mediation is that of her Son, that prayer to her is prayer in him. And Mother Julian certainly was fully in accord with this Catholic attitude to the sweet Mother of God. No Catholic can exclude the Mother when beholding the Son upon the Cross; praying at Mass he finds himself at the Mother's side receiving the gift of her motherhood from the Victim Son.

With this same cheer of mirth and joy our good Lord looked down on the right side and brought to my mind where our Lady stood in the time of his passion; and said *Wilt thou see her?* . . . And also our Lord speaketh to all mankind that shall be saved, as it were all to one person, as if he said: *Wilt thou see in her how thou art loved? For thy love I made her so high, so noble and so worthy; and this pleaseth me, and so I will that it doeth thee.* (c. 25, pp. 52-3.)

Such sound doctrine as this makes the attack on Catholic devotion to our Lady and the saints on the ground that it takes away from a personal attachment to our Lord appear as the false argument it is. All sacrifice and worship is centred in the prayer of the Cross and the more channels it finds thereto the quicker its arrival. All the prayers said by the Christian are 'Through our Lord Jesus Christ', and all reach the depths of the Trinity *Per ipsum cum ipso et in ipso*. The Canon of the Mass, deriving its words from St Paul, says that *all* honour and glory goes through him.

The Word made flesh is then the ground of all praise, the centre where all prayer is united; and we can go deeper into this aspect of the prayer of union following Mother Julian's short treatise on prayer, while declaring that 'Christ is the ground of our beseeching'.

There are those who decry the constant habit of asking things of God, preferring the more self-forgetful prayer of praise. The younger Chesterton expressed it thus:

The mountains praise thee, O Lord!
But what if a mountain said,
'I praise thee,
But put a pine-tree halfway up on the left;
It would be much more effective, believe me'.
It is time that the religion of prayer gave
place to the religion of praise.¹

This is a common attitude among those who regard the prayer of petition as also taking away from the purity of their attachment to God. To ask for the innumerable things of which mankind continually stands in need would certainly seem to add multiplicity to prayer, and people will point to the ceaseless procession of novenas, candles, prayers to St Anthony or St Christopher, and so on for ever—devotions which continually preoccupy those who indulge in them. Those who would have theology behind them point to the two definitions of prayer, both deriving from St John Damascene and both used by St Thomas. The catechism gives only the general definition of what G.K. calls the 'prayer of praise'—namely, the raising of the mind and heart to God. Damascene calls prayer in

¹ Quoted from *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* by Maisie Ward, p. 58. G.K. wrote this in his notebook c. 1895 when he was 21 years old.

one place *ascensio ad Deum*. Nevertheless the definitions which St Thomas chooses from the same author to represent the essence of prayer (i.e. *oratio*) is *Petitio decentium a Deo*, the asking worthy things of God, and those who regard petition as something inferior to the prayer of praise or union should consider the way in which he relates these two definitions of Damascene: 'Prayer tends to God through being moved by the will of charity, as it were, and this in two ways: firstly, on the part of the object of our petition, because when we pray we ought principally to ask to be united to God, according to psalm 26, 4, "One thing I have asked of the Lord this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life"; secondly, on the part of the petitioner who ought to approach the person whom he petitions, either coming to a place as when he petitions a man, or approaching in mind as when he petitions God. Hence Denis says that "when we call upon God in our prayers we unveil our mind in his presence"; and in the same sense Damascene says that "prayer is the raising up of the mind to God".' (II-II, 83, 1 ad 2.)

Mother Julian follows closely this train of St Thomas's thought and includes in her treatise on prayer, which is the kernel of her fourteenth revelation, two definitions which amount to those of petition and union given above. Thus she defines 'beseeching' (i.e. the prayer of petition) as

a true, gracious, lasting will of the soul, oned and fastened into the will of our Lord by the sweet inward work of the Holy Ghost. (p. 85.)

In the following chapter she defines 'prayer' from the point of view of the mind as a

right understanding of that fulness of joy that is to come, with well-longing and sure trust. (p. 89.)

And she includes explicitly also the prayer of thanksgiving. But we must have a right understanding of what *petitio decentium a Deo* really implies if we are to escape the over-active and ego-centric conception against which many modern writers are reacting.

If petition from God comprised some sort of attempt to bend God's will to our multitudinous desires and requirements, then certainly petitionary prayer would draw away from unity and end in a chaos of a thousand conflicting demands. It is this abuse, which is of course pure superstition, which prompts Aldous Huxley to write: 'To acquire the knack of getting his petitions answered a man does not have to know or love God. . . . All that he requires is a burning sense of the importance of his own ego and its desires, coupled with a firm conviction that there exists, out there in the universe, something not himself which can be wheedled or dragooned

into satisfying those desires.' (*Perennial Philosophy*, p. 251.) The prayer of the Christian has nothing to do with this self-centred and self-willed demand for satisfaction. Even when at the beginning of her experience Mother Julian asks for the spiritual favour of being allowed to suffer with the Son of God she does not forget that all such prayer rests on the one condition that it be the will of God, which will know no shadow of change—'nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt'. The only petition she makes without condition is one that is clearly according to the divine will, the spiritual good of contrition and a steadfast longing for God (c. 2, pp. 4-5; compare St Thomas II-II, 83, 5.)

Without going deeply into the theology of the fulfilment and infallibility of prayer we must here remind the reader of the general principle that petition is one of the means ordained by God for reaching spiritual blessings and certain temporal ones. In asking for these things a man is therefore measuring his own will and desires upon the infinitely permanent and stable will and desires of God. Nor does this represent a sort of mechanical apparatus, as though a man were groping about for the operative switch and having laid his finger on it everything happens as planned. Supposing a man needs money urgently and prays for the amount to meet his bills; granted that it is good for him to receive this money it may well be that God has designed that this 'good' shall be acquired only by recourse to the originator of all being, the Giver of existence itself. In applying to the Giver of all good gifts the petitioner will be acknowledging his true relationship to the Creator and at the same time fulfilling the will and desire of God—whether he receives the money is of slight importance compared with this fundamental reality of the spiritual life. Again, and more obviously, a man may realise his need for charity and the more he realises his lack of this virtue the more will he turn to the author of charity, not that it can merely be 'had for the asking', as the phrase goes, but that his desire and the expression of his desire in prayer are an apt preparation for the reception of the gift which can alone come from the one who infuses grace and virtue. It would be presumption to think that one's petitions, made under the impulse of grace, were all one's own idea and execution. Our Lord tells Mother Julian that he is the source of the petition. Christian prayer is necessarily inspired by Christ:

I am ground of thy beseeching: first it is my will that thou have it, and after, I make thee to will it; and after, I make thee to beseech it and thou beseechest it. (p. 84, comp. p. 87.)

Our beseeching, Mother Julian realises, is not the cause of God's goodness to us, but on the contrary God's goodness and generosity

are the cause of our petition. Prayer makes us pliant to God, but not God pliant to us, for there is no need of this since he is 'ever alike in love' (p. 91).

The objection to this type of prayer as well as the idea that it is over active and unsuited to the higher phases of prayer derive from the confusion of regarding it as man caused and man centred. The more a man asks of God the more he realises his dependence on God for everything; the more he asks as a Christian through Christ, the ground of his beseeching; the more unified and single becomes his prayer. He is all the time praying, beseeching, that God's will may be done in his regard; he is more and more moulding his own human will upon the changeless will of God's unfathomable and infinitely tender love. And thus he 'raises his mind and heart to God'. To realise the need for so raising the mind and heart is to acknowledge a lack, a need, a dependence on the source of all good. Such acknowledgment is identical with the prayer of petition. Experience proves that those more versed in the ways of prayer and approaching nearer than most to the heights of holiness are seldom impatient with the many devotions of Christian piety. In them all they find our Lord, the Ground, drawing his simple faithful into close union with him by means of novenas and 'Agnus Deis', scapulars and blessed beads. And people can reach a very perfect form of contemplative prayer by the simple expression, repeated over and over again, of some gracious need: Lord save me, I perish; Jesus have mercy on me, a sinner; I do believe, Lord, help thou my unbelief.

Such is the teaching of the Gospels on prayer. Our Lord insists that we ask more and more vehemently and with almost unmannerly persistence, knocking and calling until our prayer is heard. When he teaches the apostles to pray without the many words of the heathen, he instructs them to make seven petitions. Even praise and worship must be couched in the terms of the petition. A man cannot stand up on his own account and offer a gift of praise, for even the gift of praise proceeds in the first instance from the giver of all good gifts. Therefore he must make a humble petition that God may be praised: 'Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done'. There is no type of prayer without this element of desire and of dependence which are the foundation of the prayer of beseeching.

The forty-third chapter of the *Revelations* is so full of sound doctrine in this connection that it is impossible to do it justice here. But it shows how the true prayer of beseeching grounded and growing in Christ leads on to unity. The chapter begins with the words 'Prayer oneth the soul to God'; and the author goes on to show how

the true petition becomes one of asking God to do what he is going to do, and that pleases him greatly. Then the desire for God grows so intense that the words of the petition fade away in the quiet beholding of the beloved.

Then we see not, for the time, what we should more pray, but all our intent with all our might is set wholly to the beholding of him. And this is an high unperceivable prayer, as to my sight; for all the cause wherefor we pray, it is oned into the sight and beholding of him to whom we pray (p. 90).

This is what St Anthony meant when he said, 'He prays best who knows not that he prays'. And when Bl. Angela of Foligno was one Lent very arid at prayer she besought God for himself, and love came to her. 'And I desired not to see nor feel nor hear any other creature, and I spoke not. But my soul spoke within me, imploring Love not to make her languish through so great love, for I reckoned life to be death.' (*Catholic Mysticism*, Thorold, p. 146.)

Dealing with the subject more scientifically and analytically St Teresa describes this prayer of union as the result of a constant seeking after God, a constant life of petition. 'While seeking God in this way the soul becomes conscious that it is fainting almost completely away, in a kind of swoon, with an exceeding great and sweet delight. . . .' (*Life*, c. 18. Peers. I, 108.) St John of the Cross, too, speaks of this gradual absorption of the many prayers in the one prayer of love, everything which the soul does or says causing it greater love and greater delight in God. (*Spiritual Canticle*, 19, 8. Peers. II, 113.)

It is fitting that a word which signifies principally the activity of asking for things should have come to be used for the generic term of all converse and communing with God; prayer means principally beseeching but it stands for every form of the raising of the mind and will to God whether it be active or passive. Christ gathers all our desires and aspirations in himself. If we expose evil desires to him, then they vanish away unable to stand in the light of his presence; so prayer purifies the desires and when we need things our Lord follows us and attunes our will to his or when caught up passively in the beholding of God we follow him, instinctively attuning ourselves (p. 91).

'The goodness of God', Mother Julian had written earlier in the book, 'is the highest prayer, and it cometh down to the lowest part of our need.' (p. 13.) And in the very last chapter when she sees finally that Love is the meaning of all her 'sights' she goes back to this treatise on prayer:

For charity pray we all to God with God's working, thanking, trusting, enjoying. For thus will our good Lord be prayed to, as by the understanding that I took in all his own meaning and in the sweet words where he saith full merrily: 'I am the Ground of thy beseeching'.²



ST NILUS, A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF THE FIFTH CENTURY

BY

H. C. GRAEF



THOUGH the term 'spiritual director' is of modern origin, the vocation it denotes is very old. Wherever men have devoted themselves to the pursuit of perfection they have felt the need for guidance from someone more experienced than themselves. Even among those remarkable old monks and hermits that peopled the deserts of the eastern part of the Empire from the fourth century onwards, St Nilus is an outstanding figure. Perhaps his most striking characteristic is his gift for spiritual direction in the full modern sense of the word. The old legend that made him a high official at Constantinople who left the court late in life in order to become a hermit on Mt Sinai agrees ill with this office of a spiritual guide as he is represented in his many letters and several weighty treatises. But this ancient story is no longer accepted by scholars; according to their general opinion we have to think of St Nilus as the experienced superior and novice master of a monastery at Ancyra in Galatia. This is the evidence of his own writings. His great reputation caused many works to be falsely attributed to him; among them the famous *Peristeria*, the source of the legend, and the *De Oratione* which really belongs to Evagrius Ponticus. Hence the material for the presentation of his spiritual teaching will be taken from those works which modern critics acknowledge as authentic, particularly from the *Tractatus de Voluntaria Paupertate ad Magnam*, *Liber de Monastica Exercitatione*, *De monachorum Praestantia*, and the *Letters* the great majority of which are generally held to be genuine.¹

The impression these writings leave on the reader is one of sur-

² Page 244 of the Orchard Series Edition of the *Revelations*, prepared by Dom Roger Hudleston. This text is more accurate in some respects.

¹ All these works are in Migne, P.G., 79, to which volume the following citations refer.

prising modernity. There is little of terrifying mortifications and other spiritual 'athletics' but a good deal of sound commonsense. For St Nilus as for St John of the Cross the way that leads to perfection is the way of detachment, and first of all of detachment from material things. 'Let us therefore begin to leave behind the things that are present, let us despise possessions, money and all that absorbs thought . . . let us cast off the burden, so that the vessel may rise a little; overcome by the gale, let us throw overboard also much of the cargo, that the governing mind may be saved together with the thoughts that are sailing with it.' (*De Monastica Exercitatione*, 64, 797.) Without this foundation of detachment from external things no sound spiritual life is possible, for it is the uniform experience of all who give themselves to it seriously that all undue attachment upsets prayer. At the same time, prayer itself is the principal means of detachment for by it the soul learns where are her weak points, what are the things to which she still clings too much. The more she advances, the more severe become the demands made on her readiness to 'let go'. Attachments moreover give the devil his best opportunity to deceive man. 'How', St Nilus asks, 'can he who is burdened with a thousand worries fight against the demons who are free from all cares? The divine Scripture says, "The valiant man shall flee away naked in that day" (Amos 2, 16)—the naked man, not he who is laden with heavy garments of worldly things; the naked man, not he who is prevented from running by the thoughts of material possessions; for he who is naked is difficult to catch and those who wish him ill cannot hold him.' (*Ibid.*, 65, 797D.)

These exhortations to detachment are addressed to religious, which means that they do not only refer to grosser attachments to great possessions, but also to the smaller but nevertheless very insidious ones that can be indulged in even in the monastic life. Detachment moreover has very wholesome psychological effects. Far from making a man bitter, as those might think who have never practised it, it makes him on the contrary carefree and happy. For 'the poor are not troubled by the desire of possessions, but are ready to leap and rejoice . . . because, being unconcerned with vanities, they can bring a free mind to obtaining the better things'. (*De Paupertate* 1, 969C.) This note of the joyful liberty of the friends of Christ, who 'dispose of the possessions of their Friend with boldness as they wish' (*Ibid.*, 19, 993B), precisely because they are detached from them, re-echoes throughout his writings; there is nothing tense or cramped in his teaching. There is to be liberty, not only from attachment to worldly possessions, but also from self-will; for like St John of the Cross, he knows well that there

are many pitfalls even in the seemingly good things of the spiritual life, especially in spectacular mortifications for which he evinces singularly little admiration. It was the golden age of the Stylites, when many 'spiritual' men and even a few women, attracted by the example of a few genuine saints, left the world for the platform of a pillar on which they spent their days often surrounded by admiring crowds.

This is how Nilus tells one of them what he thinks of his self-chosen vocation: 'Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth', and 'Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled. But you who have performed no deed worthy of praise have exalted yourself on a high pillar in order to gain praises for it. But take heed lest having readily been praised for this by corruptible men you should, contrary to your expectation, be counted for nothing by the incorruptible God, because you have had more than your fill of human praise. . . . For it would be absurd indeed that one's body should be standing high up on a pillar, whilst one's mind, unwilling to be occupied with heavenly things, should be dragged down, chatting away pleasantly with women.' (*Letters*, 114 and 115, 249B,C.)

These external feats of mortification find very little favour in the eyes of the novice master of Ancyra, and even fasting, so highly thought of by many of the ancient monks, does not impress him much if not performed with prudence and under obedience. 'If we want to tread the devils under foot', he writes to a monk, 'let us show them humility in all things. Let us put away our own will and, as we gladly receive fasting if enjoined by our superiors, so also let us accept eating or drinking and temporary physical rest if advised to do so by those well able to judge nature in such matters; let us obey them willingly and without contradiction. For partaking of food from obedience castigates devils even better than fasting.' (*Letters*, 1, 307, 193B,C.)

In reading such well-known works as the *Lausiac History* one is often tempted to think of the spirituality of the old eastern monks as very different from our own; so much of it seems concerned with eccentricities and externals. But these are only the features appealing then as now to the popular imagination; the underlying reality is very different and must be sought for in another kind of literature, less readily accessible but more concerned with the substance of patristic spirituality. For fasts and vigils, always somewhat spectacular if treated in spiritual literature, are indeed salutary, but unessential. If health demands they may be given up without its affecting the substance of the religious life. It is humility and obedience that make the monk; they can never be given up

or even suspended. They are moreover the infallible means of defeating the devil who loves to disguise himself as an angel of light and under pretext of an austere life incapacitates the body for useful work and leads the soul into pride, the deadliest sin of all. St Nilus is very outspoken on the subject and does not spare those monks for whom the very excellence of their way of life becomes a dangerous snare. 'The holy angels', he writes, 'imitating their Lord love humility. If therefore a monk, boasting of his exalted kind of life, indulges in pride and cannot be weaned from it, the angels leave the boaster and go far away; they will no longer help, guard and succour him as heretofore. But straightaway there come the wicked demons and make friends with him who is deprived of his blessed guardians and throw the proud man into fornication, or theft, or murder, adultery or any other forbidden thing. For the worst of all faults is pride—through pride the devil, the author of all wickedness, fell down from heaven.' (*Letters*, 1, 326, 200C,D.)

St Nilus, experienced spiritual director that he was, did not stop short at individual vices and imperfections but got down to fundamental difficulties. The state of perfection itself can become a snare; the monk may turn into a pharisee thanking God that he is not like other men. Therefore the more austere his way of life the more humble he must be 'lest vainglory should find a place in you, and you reap nettles instead of wheat and lose your labours.' (*Letters*, 2, 51; 221C.)

This temptation to pride feeds not only on asceticism but also on intellectual achievements. Thus he counsels a monk: 'Do not desire your superior to be eloquent, for it is not the eloquent who are pleasing to God. But seek to be subject unto the end even to an ignorant person, you, who in the opinion of the wise of the world are yourself wise, and you will be crowned with the most precious crown of humility and genuine obedience.' (*Letters*, 1, 34; 100A.) There are few more severe and efficacious tests of humility than the subjection of a higher intellect to a lower. It is comparatively easy to obey a superior whose wisdom one admires, but to be constantly submissive to one whose faculties seem inferior to one's own is a hard trial, but a trial that purifies the soul in her depths. And certain superficial minds will find it even harder than others and have to take special precautions. St Nilus has a word for them too. 'Constant reading and enjoyment of great words', he says, 'is not suitable for a man who is puffed up. For knowledge makes the empty-headed man conceited and befogs the proud as wine befogs him who suffers from fever. As long as the soul has not been purified of pride the demon continues to assault her. . . . But if you want him to turn back quickly, approach the unshakable tower of

humility, and armed with watchings, prayer and psalmody, you will see with your eyes the discomfiture of the enemy.' (*Letters*, 2, 58; 225B.) 'Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation.' (Matt., 25, 41.) St Nilus repeats our Lord's injunction, so frequently forgotten, that to conquer temptation we must rely on God's strength not on our own; for it is by prayer and psalmody, that is by our personal converse with God and by the official prayer of the Church, that the divine power works and preserves man from making shipwreck of his spiritual life.

It seems a simple remedy, but the question arises at once: how is prayer to be made? Perhaps this may appear to be a 'modern' question; it is sometimes assumed that the old monks knew as it were by instinct how to pray. But apparently St Nilus's novices and correspondents had as many difficulties with it as religious and laymen of our own day and were as prone to the most ridiculous distractions. Here is a delightful passage on this trial which may perhaps comfort some of our contemporaries by showing them that human nature was much the same 1,500 years ago.

'We are often distracted from the words of prayer and follow thoughts that lead us astray without offering resistance. Having gone down on our knees, we present indeed a picture of prayer to the eye, but our minds wander to things that amuse us: so we talk pleasantly with our friends, give our enemies an angry dressing-down, enjoy dinner parties, build houses for our relatives, plant, travel, trade, are raised to the priesthood and administer the churches entrusted to us with great devotion—and so we turn over many things in our thoughts, dwelling on each as our inclinations dispose us.' (*De Voluntaria Paupertate*, 22; 997C,D.) But St Nilus draws this amusing picture only to provide a remedy, and his counsels are nothing if not practical. If we expect from him some esoteric 'wisdom of the East' we shall be grievously disappointed. His advice is as matter-of-fact as that of any 'hard-boiled' modern novice-master: Do not be too long over your prayers, he says, but alternate with work. Novices who will not work under pretext of giving their mind to better things find very little sympathy with him. 'Now here is a mistake novices should not make; it is this. Inexperienced as they are in the ways of prayer and monastic observance they ask to be given tasks that appear great to their imagination and want to leave the lesser ones aside. They seem to prefer eating what has been prepared by others and sparing their hands to a life that is good both for soul and body; whereas someone who divides his time between work and prayer and keeps a proper balance subjects his body through its labours and pacifies its unruly desires. Thus the soul co-operates with the body and

when she wants repose stirs up its desire for prayer as being the easier thing and conducive to refreshment. The work, too, profits by the change; for the soul will soon get back to it from prayer; since she gets depressed if she remains too long occupied with the same thing.' (*De Volunt. Paupert.*, 24; 999A,B.) 'Truly, laziness is the cause of many evils and uses leisure to make habitual vices worse and teach new ones. For it is a past master in the art of inventing new evils. Those therefore who under the pretext of perpetual prayer reject manual work do not only not pray—for the mind cannot always remain fixed on the object of its desires without relaxing—but are distracted beyond what is normal by many unseemly things.' (*Ibid.*, 26; 1001C.) Nevertheless we can follow the command to pray always for 'even in the midst of occupations the prudent and pious mind can always retain the thought of its Creator.' (*Letters*, 238; 169D.)

(*To be concluded.*)



CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

SIR,—The account given in your September issue of the Carmelite Lay Institute at Venasque provides a further interesting contribution to the recurring discussion on Contemplation whilst living in the world.

One cannot fail to admire the courage and devotion of these tertiaries; but two queries arise:

First; it seems to be assumed that a good soul might voluntarily choose to become a contemplative, and that this end could be attained within a training period of two years.

It would appear that the word 'contemplative', like the phrase 'inferiority complex', is acquiring a different meaning in general use from that assigned to it by the technical experts.

Do not all the mystical writers insist that contemplation is the work of God in a soul mysteriously initiated by Him, and often unperceived in the early stages, even by the spiritual director? The very nature of the preliminary purgation renders the course of illumination unintelligible to the developing contemplative soul herself.

We are told that the duration of the successive 'nights' varies a great deal, being very rarely brief, and often extending over a number of years.

Thus it would seem extraordinary that such an experience could be in any sense 'regimented', even by traditional mystics like the Carmelites.

Secondly; though contemplation might indeed result from a two-

year retreat of this kind (one learns that almost all enclosed nuns do in fact become contemplatives) is it wise to transfer into the atmosphere of the world a contemplation developed within the cloister? The author of the article seems to hint that the rub does indeed come just at this point.

It seems to me reasonable to expect that such degree of contemplation as it is possible to maintain in the world would be infused into the chosen soul in the course of her daily duties in the world.

It would, of course, engender a craving for peace and retirement, and it might be legitimate to satisfy this to some extent.

But if the prospect of a complete retirement for the space of two years appeals to the soul with such compulsive attraction, surely this indicates an incipient vocation to the cloistered religious life and should be considered as such.—Yours etc.,

GLADYS M. STANFORD.



REVIEWS

THE BOOK OF DANIEL in the Westminster Version. By Fr Cuthbert Lattey, S.J. (Browne and Nolan, Dublin; 12s.6d.)

It is indeed a pleasant thing that we are able to welcome this first of the Greater Prophets to appear in the Westminster Version. As is well known, the Westminster Version is the great English Catholic undertaking which sets out to present the Scriptures in a translation made from the original tongues supported by introductions and notes. The Version appears in two recensions, a longer with fairly full notes and elaborate introductions and appendices, a volume to a book or group of books, and a shorter with much abbreviated introductions and notes and in a smaller format comprising a whole part of the Bible in a single volume. The New Testament began to appear in fascicules in 1913 and finally (by 1935) the complete New Testament in four large and handsome volumes in the long recension. In 1948 a short recension of the New Testament appeared in a smaller format.

The Old Testament began in 1934 with some Minor Prophets in separate volumes in the long recension, and then similarly the First Book of the Psalms (1-40(41)), which was shortly afterwards followed by a complete Psalter in a short recension and small format. Many obstacles, largely financial, prevented a more rapid succession of Old Testament volumes; and it is therefore particularly good to see *Daniel* appearing.

The Westminster Version is under the general editorship of Fr Lattey and many contributors have been invited to take part in its production, each contributor being totally responsible for the books allotted to him under the merely general supervision of the general editor.

The medium of translation is 'biblical English', which by reason

of its very origin from translation from the Hebrew is particularly suited to a precise and literal representation of Hebrew thought. The reader in view is the student, the person to whom the token-words of biblical diction are full of meaning, the person who will want to study the introductory articles and follow the text with the notes. The Version therefore is fulfilling quite a different purpose from that envisaged by a translation such as that of Mgr Knox, who deliberately sets out to capture the casual reader who has perhaps never opened a Bible before and who has to be drawn to read the biblical message by finding it presented in language instantly intelligible to him.

The present volume is the work of the foremost biblical scholar in Catholic England and it would be presumptuous to weigh or criticise any of his renderings or conclusions. The introduction and the notes are, in view of the difficulty of the material, rather fuller than those of any preceding volumes of the Westminster Version,* and in this case approximate to the stature of a full-length commentary; and it may indeed be said that this work represents the last word in exegesis of the Book of Daniel.

The translation is made from the Hebrew and Aramaic, and from the Greek of the deuterocanonical sections, which are the Song of the Three Children (3, 24-90) and the appendices in chapters 13-14, the stories of Susanna, Bel, the Dragon (or Serpent), and of the Lions' Den. In these the Septuagint text and that of Theodotion (from which St Jerome translated) are given on opposite pages, for they are notably different.

In the Introduction the various traditional and modern views of the origin of the book are discussed, and the most important section is that which deals with the apocalyptic character of the book, a feature which receives special emphasis. It is the visions in the Book of Daniel that are the principal element, and the historical narrative serves as a framework; it is not an account in which strange visions happen to occur. It is particularly for this emphasis that we owe a debt of gratitude to Fr Lattey. He writes (on p. xxvi): 'From a careful consideration of the work, and from the study of apocalyptic literature generally, it is clear that the real author wrote during the time of Antiochus' persecution'. This places the composition of the book in the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, B.C. 175-164. The visions themselves are historical, and present accurately the history from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (Nabuchodonosor) until Antiochus after which the indications are quite imprecise. The historical equations of the visions are skilfully tabulated on pp. xxx-xxxii. Be it said at once that the apocalyptic manner of recounting history in no way derogates from the veracity of the historical narrative interposed between the visions, or necessarily impugns the historical person of Daniel. It was a commonplace of the apocalyptic style to attach the visions to a great person of antiquity whose own history was then recounted *pari passu*.

Another matter that receives emphasis in this work is 'the principle of compenetration', a phrase which Fr Lattey has used for many years and which has now become current coin among the exegetes. The idea itself goes back to St Jerome and means that in a given prophecy there is a foreshortening of the prophetic perspective and the prophet looks through the type (e.g. Antiochus) to the antitype (e.g. Antichrist) and the descriptions apply to both, actually to the former and typically to the latter. This is particularly important when the prophet is dealing in chapters 8, 11 and 12 with the coming destruction of Antiochus typifying that of Antichrist.

The book is well produced and graceful as far as can be hoped for in a post-war production as compared with the lovely Longmans edition of the New Testament before the war. The present writer regrets the abandonment in the later Old Testament volumes of the Westminster of the notes in small type in the lower part of the same page as the text. They are now gathered in consecutive pages at the back (without, unhappily, references at the page-heads), which necessitates a permanent right-hand finger in the notes and left-hand finger in the text. The writer would gladly sacrifice the longer spells of reading the text without turning over, and have the text and notes on one page, turning over quickly when reading the text alone.

This commentary has been long in begetting and is the result of some 35 years of study (see the preface), and this very volume has been several years in preparation. We are therefore able to welcome it with complete confidence and gratitude to its learned author for having placed before us the fruit of his profound and mature scholarship.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

THE SACRED ACTIONS: MY PART, A Mass-book for the Young.
By Hubert McEvoy, S.J. (Oliver & Boyd; 4s.6d.)

CATECHISM THROUGH THE LITURGY: Part One. By Dom Denys
Rutledge. (Douglas Organ; 2s.6d.)

In *The Sacrifice We Offer* Fr McEvoy provided an admirably illustrated commentary on the Mass, and his new book, intended for 'the growing-up', uses the same method of instruction with equal success. More than fifty photographs of the stages of the Mass are accompanied by a clear description of what is happening and what it means. Brief historical notes—such as an explanation of the origin of 'collections' or an account of the development of vestments—add to the interest of the text, and under each illustration are short prayers, usually taken from the liturgy itself.

There could hardly be a more useful guide to an intelligent participation in the sacrifice of the Mass. The text is intended to be read at home, so that at Mass the illustrations of the sacred action may be related to what has already been read. Here is a practical solution to the problem of providing a Mass-book which, using the actions and prayers of the Mass itself, will do more than help

'prayer during Mass'. Fr McEvoy has realised that the liturgy itself supplies all that is needed, providing a concrete 'engagement' in the sacred action and an understanding of the words which declare its meaning.

Fr Rutledge, in the first of a series of four books, shares Fr McEvoy's concern that the liturgy, and especially the Mass, should be realised for what it is: the primary teacher of Christian doctrine. 'Life and action is the centre of it and what is being done is explained and commented on while it is actually being accomplished. The spiritual reality being effected is presented dramatically in word, movement, music, appealing to all the senses, surrounded by a constant narrative, comment and soliloquy on what is taking place, emphasising first one aspect, then another.'

An elaborate—perhaps too elaborate—diagram of 'Christ's work of redemption accomplished in the Mass' provides a summary of Fr Rutledge's method and its application. He argues, rightly, that the liturgy should be the basis of Christian instruction, since it contains all that is to be believed and contains it as realised in the actual experience of the believer as a member of the Mystical Body. But he provides a useful scheme for relating his own method to the Catechism and to the usual course of instruction in the Old Testament and the life of our Lord.

Catechism through the Liturgy should greatly help the enrichment of religious instruction by referring it to the illimitable source of the Church's life. But its usefulness may be weakened by some untidiness of presentation and by a failure to decide whether its readers are to be teachers or children. Its style and approach vary from one emphasis to the other. It would seem that the book itself should be addressed to teachers who can then apply its excellent methods.

I.E.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS (BUTLER): First Supplementary Volume.

By Donald Attwater. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

Eleven years have passed since the last volume of the revised Butler's *Lives of the Saints* was published. In that time some omissions have naturally come to light, while new canonisations and beatifications have added considerably to the calendar. For these reasons a supplementary volume has now appeared and it is proposed that additional volumes should appear at ten-yearly intervals, so that there may always be available an up-to-date record in English of the saints and *beati* of the Catholic Church.

The Thurston-Attwater revision of Butler has by this time established itself as an authoritative and well-written encyclopaedia of hagiography. The new volume which is entirely the work of Mr Attwater will at once take its place with the other twelve. It has the same moderation of judgment, incision of style and accurate indications of sources which have made of the revised Butler perhaps the most notable English Catholic work of scholarship of recent times.

The first group of additional biographies includes notices of twenty English and Welsh martyrs whose beatification had not taken place when the January and February volumes appeared. Thus such attractive figures as Bd Robert Southwell and Bd Anne Line now appear for the first time. Also dealt with are some English and Welsh saints such as St Caedmon, St Gwladys and St Melangell, who were omitted by accident, or, one suspects, through Fr Thurston's scrupulosity. For Dominicans it will be of interest to see that Bd Mark of Modena is now included. And Boethius appears as a martyr.

The major part of the volume is concerned with the twenty-three new canonisations and beatifications. (Most of those canonised since 1937 already appeared as *beati* in earlier volumes). Among them are sixteen women of whom no fewer than fourteen were foundresses of religious congregations or were engaged in similar work. Only two lay people, Contardo Ferrini and Mary Goretti (who was only twelve years old) are to be found among them. Among these admirable biographies it is impossible to discriminate, but one may mention Mr Attwater's life of Bd Mary Teresa de Soubiran, foundress of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, as a model of what a brief 'life' should be.

The volume is of special interest because of its inclusion of a number of Russian saints, all of whom lived after the dispute between Rome and Constantinople in the eleventh century and whose liturgical *cultus* has been authorised by the Holy See. Thus included are such unfamiliar saints (to the West) as St Sergius of Radonezh, St Cyril of Turov and St Abraham of Smolensk. It is indeed fortunate that in Mr Attwater Butler's *Lives* has an editor of truly Catholic sympathies who is able to interpret so justly the Church's mind and practice in regard to the holiness of her children.

I.E.

JACOB BOEHME. *Studies in his Life and Teaching*. By Hans L. Martensen. New edition, revised with Notes and Appendices by Stephen Hobhouse. (Rockcliffe; 21s.)

Miss Underhill claimed Boehme as one of the very few Protestant mystics and for that reason alone we may welcome this revised edition of what might be called 'the essential Boehme'. Martensen collected all the most important sections from the seven large volumes of the mystical cobbler's works; and now Mr Hobhouse has brought Martensen's work up to date including references to recently discovered Boehme MSS as well as to Berdyaev's debt to this German mystic. In considering this revision of a mystical classic we may be excused for considering the attitude of the revisor rather than the revision. It is interesting to see how Mr Hobhouse was brought to recognise Boehme's worth through his study of William Law who was himself inspired by Boehme. Here we have a 'tradition' of inspiration: Boehme—Law—Hobhouse. Then immediately the inquirer will want to know whether this tradition is authentic, and whether Boehme himself had true insight into the

Mystery. What criterion have we to allow us to accept Boehme as a mystical authority? The Catholic will always approach 'mystical' writings, even those of the greatest such as St John of the Cross, with his terms of reference firmly fixed in the living Church in which he finds the true and living Gospel always being expounded, the true Word of God, the revelation of the mystery. But for Mr Hobhouse it is quite the opposite; having discovered the light reflected in Boehme's pewter pot he can approach the Bible itself with new confidence for he feels that he has new light to discern the objectionable from the true in the Bible itself. He has apparently been taught by the mystics what is 'unchristlike' in the New Testament, what books have to be rejected and what can be explained by allegorical interpretations. Such an approach is surely not only presumptuous but also dangerous. It is of course the devout modernist's approach which ends by offering the whole Bible as a burnt holocaust and leaving men without a vestige of Christian hope. Yet with the surety of a faith grounded in the living Christ one can read the mysterious effusions of such a man as Boehme with interest and even with profit.

C.P.

THE SEVEN CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. By Hugh Ross Williamson. (S.C.M. Press; 9s.6d.)

This is Mr Williamson's third attempt to state his case. There was the play *The Seven Deadly Virtues* about 1934, and the pamphlet *A.D.33* at the beginning of the war and it does not need the author's statement in the Introduction to the present work that *A.D.33* was 'withdrawn from circulation as it contains much of what I now see to be heresy' to convince one of the sincerity of this book.

The theme of this book is that there is nothing new about the seven Christian virtues. 'Temperance, Fortitude, Justice (and) Prudence were the four virtues recognised by the general moral consciousness of Greece—and therefore of the ancient world.' Faith, Hope and Love characterised the outlook of the Jews. The meaning of these seven virtues was transformed by the 'internal logic of the Cross'—and he analyses the revolution which Christ originated in their meaning.

It is a penetrating study, lucidly written and with a profound understanding of the Catholic position—the whole book will repay reading, but if you need an aperitif read the short last chapter, 'The Christian Virtues in a Post-Christian State'.

TERENCE TANNER.

DIALOGUE WITH AN ANGEL. By Sister Mary Jeremy, O.P. (Devlin-Adair Company, U.S.A.; \$2.)

In the response evoked by metaphysical poetry, sympathy is half the battle: sensibility the other half. However with this particular kind of religious poetry the critic must always be wary of allowing his personal sympathy to outrun his critical sensibility; of becoming a prey to dogma for the sake of dogma. So let it be said straightaway

then that a slim volume of poetry, set in Perpetua type, bound in Della Robbia paper boards and written by an American Dominican nun are all factors likely to make the English critic suspicious. So often in the past these factors have been synonyms for preciousness and triteness. It is with some misgiving therefore that one opens Sister Mary Jeremy's book, *A Dialogue with an Angel*: but a second glance dispels misgiving—and reticence can be thrown to the winds. Automatically one is tempted to re-echo Thomas Merton's words: 'This volume of verse . . . is one of the best to have come from the pen of any Catholic poet in America'.

Alice Finnegan, as Sister Mary Jeremy began her literary career in 1933, was never of the *avant-garde* school. Instead her poetry has always been shapely and formal; her vocabulary derived principally from Greek and Latin words; her music built up out of assonances and four-line stresses. She has vigilantly eschewed both wordiness and pure verbiage so that often her meaning is highly concentrated. She ends a poem on Hopkins:

I am gall, I am heartburn. Were. God rest your soul
and it is a line in its context, with its one-word middle sentence, which is almost telegraphic in its power. Concomitant with this power, she brings to subjects such as Christmas and Easter her own freshness of vision: a freshness whose originality is in no way dwarfed because in earlier centuries other Christian poets have travelled along the same way as herself. For instance she begins a poem on the Annunciation thus:

'Hail', says the courteous angel, 'full of grace'
and another of her poems contains the line:

All Hail I will not say, for that did Judas cry.

In each case one feels that though the originality of phrasing may have come at a moment of inspiration, it belongs to a genus of inspiration which is only achieved (and carried through) by an ardent earlier apprenticeship to technique: out of past strivings new poetic feats are accomplished. In short her talent is fastidious without being finicky; modest without being mean.

Indeed, folly as it would be to let the extravagant and hyperbolic claims of some of her American contemporaries become current on this side of the Atlantic, it would be equally unfair to let this first book pass in England without giving some more just and local hint of its quality: and for that hint perhaps the fairest indication would be to say that there are some half-dozen poems in *A Dialogue with an Angel* whose altitude of quality is such as to put them on a par with the best work of the late Lilian Bowes Lyon.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE.

OLD TESTAMENT STORIES. Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. (Burns Oates; 6s.6d.)

To review this little book is not a very easy task. One hesitates between praise and blame. It is excellent that the Old Testament

stories should be told to boys and girls at school as entertainingly as Dom Hubert van Zeller knows how to do it. It is useful to possess the scheme of the older revelation and of Israel's history set out so clearly. All the same, it is doubtful if the book gives the kind of introduction to the Old Testament that Catholic children of twelve or thirteen, for whom it is intended, really require. The stories are told in a colloquial fashion, though with occasional lapses, if that is the word, into a more literary style. This familiar speech might suit a series of broadcast talks, but is perilous in writing for children who are likely to imitate what they read. Besides, it destroys the dignity of Holy Scripture. No doubt the real humanity of patriarchs, kings and prophets should be brought home to us; but the story of Abraham, say, or of Moses, ought to remain at that heroic level where the Bible places it. As for the earliest narratives of all, the book is bound to make difficulties for intelligent children. It is one thing to read the inspired text itself, believing that as God's word it is true, but understanding that its human authors were men with habits of thought and expression very different from our own, and that it has not always come down to us just as it was written. It is quite another thing to have the same stories retold, with all their surprising features, in a matter-of-fact way, with a minimum of explanation, by a writer of the present day. And to heighten the verisimilitude, details have been added. Did Cain really offer bruised or over-ripe fruit? Did Noe provide fresh meat for the passengers in the ark? Genesis has not insisted on these points. (Some details have more excusably been suppressed: what can the mysterious 'something' have been that fell from a tree and blinded Tobias's eyes?). Boys and girls whose reading and listening are not at all confined to the Scripture class in a Catholic school will be puzzled when they compare the early chapters of this book with what they find elsewhere.

DOM J. HIGGENS.

EXTRACTS

ABBE MICHONNEAU writing in *La Revue Nouvelle* (September) on 'Missionary Liturgy' will arrest the attention of all who come across his article. Not only does he bring to it all the experience and vivacity which we have come to recognise through his now famous *Paroisse, Communauté Missionnaire* (in English *Revolution in a City Parish*) but he tackles a subject of immediate interest to thousands who are seeking to revive the spirit of religion today. The liturgy for the missionary, he says, is not an end, but a means. And by this he does not imply the simple truth (which however some enthusiasts even now forget) that the liturgy is a vehicle carrying souls to God, an act of religion which is not a theological virtue and therefore deals with things going towards God. He says that in his parish he and his clergy could organise beautiful high Masses, sung correctly and elegantly carried out, bringing to priests and people many consolations and elevations. 'Should I then have carried out a missionary task?' he asks. 'I should have, I do believe, done exactly the opposite. . . . The centre of attraction would have been *ad intra* and not *ad extra*.' He believes that such worship leads to satisfaction whereas he looks for 'une inquiétude, une passion missionnaire'. These ideas will certainly cause a certain disquiet among theologians for it would seem to suggest an even greater abuse of the worship of God than the present all too frequent habit of turning worship into instruction with running commentaries and explanations of acts of worship in which the people are meant to participate. But the zealous Abbé is intent really on establishing a popular liturgy, which requires a knowledge of and adaptation to the people. And in that we can go with him all the way.

* * * *

AN AMERICAN CONTEMPLATIVE of fame such as Thomas Merton has now become is surely matter for rejoicing for Fr Gillis, until recently the renowned editor of *The Catholic World*. For Fr Gillis has always shown himself over-sensitive to any suggestion of the superiority of Europe over America in any direction. And so he begins his article in the current (September) issue of *Cross and Crown* on this note. We should join heartily with him in his satisfaction but strangely Fr Gillis's sensitivity will not allow even Merton to carry off the crown because this contemplative seems to criticise the 'actives' and Fr Gillis, who is only too well aware that some Europeans tend to condemn the activism of the States, must boost its superiority in the true Christian life. In order to do this he quotes and misquotes St Thomas and falls into all the old, and we had hoped, outmoded confusions between the act of contemplative prayer and

the contemplative life, etc. Referring to St Thomas's insistence that *simpliciter* the contemplative life is superior to the active he writes:

Fr Garrigou-Lagrange and St Thomas are concerned in this spot only with theory and theology. When we step out of the pages of a book into actual life, we must admit that a contemplative life pure and simple does not exist. There are only, or may be, moments of contemplation in an otherwise active life. Even in the life of the highest mystics contemplation can only alternate with action.

And he goes on to confuse the 'contemplative action' of teaching and preaching, which is that of the apostle and is the overflow of contemplation, with action in general, which is usually considered in terms of the moral, social virtues . . . and so on. All these confusions would be best passed over in silence except that this is the first article of the third issue of our Dominican contemporary *Cross and Crown*. No doubt the editors of this 'Thomistic Quarterly of Spiritual Theology' will gradually elaborate these important principles and we may look forward to future issues to clear up the many misunderstandings which exist in this field of theology.

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TECHNIQUE AND CONTEMPLATION is the title of the volume of *Etudes Carmélitaines* containing half the papers of the Fifth International Congress of Religious Psychology 1948 (the other half appears in a second volume under the title *Trouble et Lumière*, to be noted later in this journal). Approaching the fact of contemplative prayer from the natural plane the authors provide a great deal of interesting material for the mystical theologian to work upon. There is a study of the technique of hindu meditation, as well as an examination of the syntax of semitic languages as helping towards recollection. Inevitably too we find a long discussion on 'Acquired Contemplation' and the controversy surrounding it—from no less a pen than that of Roland Dalbiez. And over it all presides the sane and well-balanced figure of the editor and instigator of these international congresses, Fr Bruno, the distinguished Carmelite who inspires us with a confidence that these studies will not lose sight of the supernatural, the basic reality of contemplation.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS from A. P. Westbrook's collection (at 11 Dorset Road South, Bexhill, Sussex) are as varied as ever. Each set of samples sent for editorial comment has at least one new item, and there are several new reproductions of 'old masters'. These latter are the least satisfactory as they can give little impression of the beauty of the originals, but there are one or two modern designs which are fresh in conception and colour and will help to enliven

the mantelpiece of many a home this Christmas. The publisher generously announces:

As there has been no reduction in the high rate of Purchase Tax, in an endeavour to meet the popular demand for lower prices we have made substantial price reductions for many of our Christmas cards.

They range from 1½d. to 1s.4d. each. Miss Rutherford (Stratton on the Fosse, Bath, Somerset) however offers hers in dozens ranging from 2s. to 16s. Many of these are hand painted which nearly always brings an air of joy and life. All are of Christian inspiration except one, robin on a holly branch.

Daphne V. Barry has designed two attractive red cards which have some suggestion of Aubrey Beardsley—our Lady's rich apparel emerges from a lily in one case and a supporting quartet of angels in the other in the same style as Beardsley. These are from a set of nine different types of Christmas Cards including designs by Eric Gill and David Jones published by the Ditchling Press, Hassocks, Sussex (5s. for the set, but also supplied individually).

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